

SCRUTINY MATTERS AND REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN BY THE COMMISSION

42/09 - **HOMELESSNESS PERFORMANCE:** The Housing Needs Manager submitted a progress report on performance during 2008/09. She highlighted the achievements in 2008/09 which covered:

- the number of temporary accommodation units converted to permanent;
- the improved flow of households through temporary accommodation;
- support for people in temporary accommodation;
- improvements to hostels;
- information and communication; and
- the Youth Homelessness Awareness Campaign (Behind Closed Doors)

She then detailed the key themes for 2009/10 which included £75,000 funding from Business Unit Reserves for Homelessness Prevention Fund/Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme; a £57,000 grant awarded to develop a Repossessions Loan Fund; a £60,000 CLG grant awarded to North Yorkshire to tackle homelessness through repossessions; Mortgage Rescue Schemes; and surveys regarding the conversion of non self contained family hostel units and protocols for 16/17 year olds to be reviewed following recent Case Law that confirmed that the majority of young homeless people were the responsibility of North Yorkshire County Council under the Children Act 1989 and not the Housing Authority.

Questions were then invited. Councillor Pat Marsh queried the working relationship between the Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The Housing Needs Manager advised that they were located in the same building and that there was a close working relationship with the CAB and that this helped ensure that referral arrangements between the Council and CAB worked effectively. Councillor Bob Nash sought clarification of the role now played by Homelessness Appeal Panels. The Housing Needs Manager stated that there were now fewer Appeal Panels as focus was now placed upon the prevention of homelessness and the decision making process had also been reviewed. She also advised of the review procedures in place for decisions made. Members queried the affordable housing needs for the District and it was **agreed** that the Housing Needs Manager would provide Members with a breakdown, by Ward, of affordable housing needs. Councillor Stan Beer asked who set the key themes as detailed in the presentation. The Housing Needs Manager confirmed that these were taken from the Homelessness Strategy which was subject to a formal review every five years, although it was reviewed informally every year. In response to a question regarding the work of the Golden Triangle Partnership, the Housing Needs Manager stated that this was a partnership between Harrogate, Leeds and York and involved the Mortgage Rescue Scheme, although take up of the scheme had been relatively low. Regarding the recent change in case law, the Housing Needs Manager advised that the Council were revisiting their arrangements with NYCC and a working group had been established to review the processes and that, in the longer term, there should be savings to the Council and she commented that it would be hoped that these would be ring fenced for homelessness prevention.

Members also discussed those cases which had 'dropped through the net', where people had left hostels without giving indication as to where or why they were leaving etc and the Housing Needs Manager commented that there were different reasons why people did not engage and work with the Council and had chosen to abandon homelessness accommodation.

Members noted the report and the good progress made to date and it was **agreed** that a further progress report be brought back to the Commission in one year's time.

(5.40 pm - 6.20 pm)